



June 17, 2016

To Our Milwaukee Public Schools Community,

We truly appreciate your dedication, time and support to promote and encourage the success of Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) students and want to provide you with this update on the Opportunity Schools and Partnership Program (OSPP).

In June 2015, the state legislature passed a law creating the OSPP, which gives Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele the responsibility to appoint a commissioner who has the authority to transfer an MPS school or schools from the district to the OSPP.

On April 21, 2016, Commissioner Demond Means presented a proposal to MPS with a June 23 deadline for response. We appreciate the desire of County Executive Abele and Commissioner Means to develop a partnership proposal that attempts to limit harm to MPS students. However, as we have examined the OSPP proposal over the past six weeks, we have identified the following concerns:

- The academic and curricular programming lacks detail and clarity
- The school funding plan is unclear
- The school qualitative reviews outlined in both state law and the OSPP proposal have not been conducted
- The request for proposals seeking a school operator was not issued and steps have not been taken to select a school
- The OSPP proposal contains elements which contradict the legislation, namely that staff at the OSPP schools will remain employees of the district with little guidance about how this would be compliant with state law

Given these concerns, we recently requested a meeting with County Executive Abele and Commissioner Means to discuss an alternative to the OSPP proposal. We know the fundamental needs of our families include greater access to high-quality early childhood education, sustained resources and support, stable school communities, rigorous curriculum led by strong instructional leaders and having a voice in the decisions that impact their children.

With these critical factors in mind, and given that the qualitative analysis as outlined in the OSPP proposal was not completed, selecting a school would be unfair to school communities because they have not had an opportunity to participate in a qualitative review. We have developed an alternative option that will add value and align with the critical work already underway at MPS:

- Create a high-quality early childhood education program, addressing a community need acknowledged by local leaders and the Speaker's Task Force on Urban Education
- Provide the choice for families to opt-in to OSPP

Start. Stay. Succeed.
Comienza. Quédate. Triunfa.

- Locate the program inside the former 35th Street Elementary School, which is well suited to serve our youngest learners; it would share a separate and distinct space in the same building with Assata, an MPS partnership school; this is a model that has been used in the past and allows for improved achievement and better student and family engagement and support at both schools
- Next year, as outlined in the OSPP proposal, would be a planning year, with the program opening in the 2017-18 school year

Improving student outcomes is challenging and much work remains. As a district, we have implemented strategies for school turnaround rooted in collective impact including:

- Developing intentional, mutually beneficial partnerships
- Making data-informed decisions
- Implementing research-based programs
- Strengthening current infrastructure
- Maximizing resources and managing our assets

Our efforts are yielding results. More students are earning scholarships with a record-breaking \$47.8 million awarded this year; more high schools are ranked among the best in the state and nation; and over 100 MPS schools are recognized for promoting positive behaviors by an independent statewide organization. Community engagement is leading to stronger families and a healthier community. With ongoing support from committed community partners, we will continue to see positive results.

MPS is committed to ensuring that all partnerships bring additional value and enhance our current standard of care. In doing this, we must also ensure our school communities are kept intact and we believe our alternative does just that. We are prepared to discuss this alternative with County Executive Abele and Commissioner Means and will continue to keep you informed throughout the process.

For more information, please visit www.mpsmke.com/ospp or call 414-475-8274.

Best,



Darienne B. Driver, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools



Mark A. Sain, President
Milwaukee Board of School Directors